War Volunteering in Modern Times

**From the French Revolution
to the Second World War**

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1

Introduction: Volunteers, War, and the Nation since the French Revolution

Christine G. Krüger and Sonja Levsen

Historians have so far paid rather little attention to war volunteers in modern history. The phenomenon of the war volunteer has not been studied either in its comparative aspects or in terms of its development over time, and little is known about the numbers, motivations, and backgrounds of volunteers in many wars. While the relatively recent turn of military history towards the perspective of the common soldier, towards war experiences and war cultures, has generated a range of studies on conscription, conscientious objection, and desertion,¹ war volunteers have – except in the cases discussed below – rarely been studied in detail. This relative indifference of historians is particularly surprising in view of the central place accorded to volunteer movements in national myths of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The introduction of conscription in many European countries during the 19th century is generally seen as an important development in the relationship between war and nation, and even as a constitutive factor in the nation-building processes of the 19th century. Following the “master narrative” of modern military history, the transformation of the early modern standing armies into citizens’ armies, and thus the integration of the army into society, was achieved through universal service. With the emergence of the *soldat-citoyen*, the relationship between army and nation was transformed. War became a national affair.

Yet military service on the basis of conscription was an inherently contradictory practice, characterized by an “essential ambiguity”, as Thomas Hippler has convincingly argued, because it exemplified two conflicting features. On the one hand, compulsory service

was associated with political and civic rights; on the other hand, it restricted individual liberty and the rights of the conscript, by subjecting him to strict discipline and authority.² In contrast, the volunteer's decision to offer his service – a decision ideally thought of as being made in the absence of pressure or coercion – could provide a degree of legitimacy to the nation and its wars that conscription could not. The willingness of considerable numbers of men to sacrifice their lives for their nation could be interpreted by contemporaries as an unquestionable proof of national unity, of a patriotism that saw in the nation an ultimate value. Volunteers became symbols for a complete identification of the individual with the nation. Therein lay the main importance of the French Revolutionary volunteers, or the German volunteer troops in the anti-Napoleonic wars. Among the German volunteer troops who fought against Napoleon, one unit in particular, the *Freikorps Lützow*, was singled out in national memory. Its colours were used from 1818 onwards by the nascent patriotic student movement (the *Jenaer Urburschenschaft*), the featured prominently at the patriotic rally at Hambach in 1832, and were finally adopted as the German national colours in 1848 and again in 1918 and 1945. The association of black, red, and gold with the volunteers' supposedly selfless sacrifice for the nation contributed to this history, even though it is not sufficient to explain it completely.³ Examples such as this show that an exclusive focus on conscription necessarily neglects important aspects of the relationship between the individual, the military, and the nation since the 19th century. It is the aim of this book to show how a shift of perspective towards volunteering can add to – and in some aspects change – our understanding of this relationship.

Towards a history of war volunteering

In the current state of research it is impossible to give a comprehensive overview of volunteer movements in modern history and of where, when, how and why individuals volunteered to go to war. The authors in this book, however, discuss these and further questions for a wide range of 19th and 20th century wars. What made men, and sometimes women, go to war for their nation, or for other nations? What has voluntary enlistment meant in different wars; was it in the context of limited choice, or in the context of conscription? What roles did patriotism and other ideologies, individual conviction and peer pressure, material incentives and irrational, subconscious factors play in individuals' decisions to enlist in the armed forces? Which wars attracted large numbers

of volunteers, and from which social strata did they come? How did governments react to individuals who expressed the wish to fight in their armies, and how did nations remember volunteers? In what ways did the war experiences of volunteers, their ways of interpreting and justifying the war's causes and aims, differ from those of regular soldiers?

To date, these questions have not been researched from a long-term and comparative perspective. In the rest of this introduction we intend to sketch the current state of research on volunteers in modern history, to indicate where and how the authors of this book add new perspectives to existing debates, and to identify other themes and questions that are of interest for a history of war volunteering in general and for the authors of this book in particular. Instead of trying to develop an ex-post definition of the volunteer, the authors in this book look at groups that defined themselves or were defined by their contemporaries as war volunteers. In order to put this definition into context, we conclude our introduction with an analysis of the changing meanings and connotations of the term "volunteer" in modern history.

Volunteering and patriotism: myths and deconstructions

The role of patriotism in volunteers' decision to go to war, and its relative importance compared with other motives, has so far been discussed by historians primarily for two groups: the *volontaires* of the French Revolutionary Wars, and the First World War volunteers, with focus on the British "New Armies". It is certainly no coincidence that these two movements have attracted most historical attention, each for its own reasons.

Standing out as supposedly the first "national" volunteers in European history, the volunteers raised by the revolutionary government in 1791 and 1792 have since attracted the attention of a wide range of historians. Thomas Hippler analyses in this book the construction of the revolutionary volunteer as a mythical figure and the various reinterpretations and deconstructions of this figure in 20th-century historiography. In recent times, Annie Crépin, Alan Forrest, John Lynn and others have uncovered new facts regarding the line between myth and reality in the image of the revolution's volunteers.⁴ The 19th-century myth of the *volontaires* embodying the best qualities of the nation, motivated by pure patriotism and idealism and thus being clearly distinguishable from both the line soldiers of the *ancien régime* and the conscripts of later years, has been replaced by detailed analyses of the volunteers' backgrounds and motivations. Patriotism, most recent studies agree, is

only one among many factors explaining the success of the *levées* of 1791 and 1792. It has, furthermore, been shown that the differences in recruitment between the revolution's volunteers and the *ancien régime's* line soldiers are in many ways blurred. Both findings support Ute Planert's argument that the Revolutionary Wars should be seen less as a turning point in the history of European war and more as one piece in a chain of events transforming European armies and wars.⁵

Volunteer movements have not been researched in a comparable way for any other war of the 19th century. In recent years, several scholars have begun to deconstruct the myths surrounding the German volunteers in the anti-Napoleonic wars. Leighton James in this book takes an important step towards the historicization of this movement by asking whether the post-war accounts given by German and Austrian volunteers who fought against Napoleon support the idea that the anti-Napoleonic wars provoked a nationalization of the German population. Historians studying the second half of the 19th century in Europe have so far largely neglected questions of voluntary enlistment in wars. For example, no detailed research has been carried out on volunteers in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71.⁶ Only for 19th-century North America, and especially for the American Civil War, is better information available.⁷ Michael Hochgeschwender in this book analyses various historiographical schools that try to explain the motives and experiences of the Irish volunteers in the war, and stresses the complexities of political and national identities in the 19th century. In studying the turn of the century wars – the Spanish-American war in 1898 and the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) – authors in this book investigate largely unexplored terrain. Matthias Speidel analyses the motivation and experiences of the more than 10,000 African-Americans who volunteered for the US army in 1898. Stephen Miller argues that British volunteers in the South African war hold an important place in British military history, because their perceived idealism and dedication created a “new, more positive image of the British soldier” and changed the image of the army in society.

Apart from the *volontaires* of the 1790s, the relationship between patriotism, nationalism, and volunteering has been investigated in most depth for the volunteer movement of the First World War. The British government's decision and strategy to fight a world war with an army almost half composed of volunteers can be considered as an apex in the historical development of war volunteering. This is most obvious when the numbers involved are considered: no other government in history has successfully raised and deployed more than 2.5 million volunteers

within a period of two years, a venture which has been studied in detail by several historians, although by no means exhaustively.⁸ In Britain in 1914, volunteering appeared to be a patriotic duty, and, what is more, not as an exceptional commitment but as a social norm internalized even by children.⁹ This was the message of recruiting postcards such as the well-known specimen showing a young girl asking her father “Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?” The diffusion of this ideal through all parts of the population – women handing white feathers to “shirkers”, children reading stories of gallant heroes – can be interpreted as an aspect of the new “total” war of the 20th century. Recent research, however, has tended to emphasize a variety of motives for volunteering other than patriotism – peer pressure, economic conditions, ideals of masculinity, to name but a few – and to question the existence of real war enthusiasm among either the population or the volunteers.¹⁰ This view does not treat the Great War as exceptional, but regards its volunteer movement, in motives if not in numbers, as being in line with earlier and later wars.

Research on volunteers in other combatant nations of the Great War is unfortunately much less substantial than on the British side. German volunteers have received some – not very detailed – attention; their French counterparts have so far been almost completely ignored by historical research. In the context of conscription, volunteering took on a different meaning: German volunteers, both during and in the aftermath of the war, were thought of and depicted as an elite, as for example in the famous Langemarck myth, rather than as representatives of the nation as a whole. While contemporary politicians and propaganda interpreted the volunteer movement as “the best indicator of a nation's enthusiasm”,¹¹ the current state of research presents a more ambivalent picture. In parallel to studies on British volunteers, historians studying the German situation now stress factors other than patriotism.¹² Considering the important role the volunteer movement played in German self-image during and after the war,¹³ it is still astonishing that it has only been addressed in a few articles by Bernd Ulrich and a short chapter in Jeffrey Verhey's book that sets out to deconstruct the myth of widespread war enthusiasm in Germany in 1914.¹⁴ While it is clear that the numbers were much smaller than claimed by the authorities, a thorough study of motivation based on ego-documents is still missing. Alexander Watson's comparative essay in this book sets the groundwork for further studies in this field. Using the concept of “defensive patriotism”, he argues against both simple “war enthusiasm” and an overemphasis on material incentives.

The trend to interpret the Great War's volunteers in terms other than "patriotism", "idealism" or "ideology" is not restricted to historians. The German novelist and Nobel prize winner Günter Grass included in his collection of short stories *My century* (1999) a story set in the years from 1907 to 1914, the message of which could hardly be more ironic. The story's main character, a young boy from a working-class family, listens on his father's shoulders to an anti-war speech by the German socialist Karl Liebknecht in 1907. As the speech goes on, the boy suddenly needs to pee, and, because his father is too absorbed in the talk to notice, pisses on his father's neck when he cannot hold it in any longer. For this misdeed he is spanked by his father in the middle of the political rally. The narrator – that boy, now a grown man – recounts after the war that "that is the reason why – the only reason why – the minute things came to a head I made a beeline for the local recruiting office and enlisted. I was even decorated twice for bravery and, after being wounded at Arras and outside Verdun, made it to N.C.O."¹⁵ Never, however, he adds, did he doubt that Liebknecht was perfectly right in his anti-war attitudes.

Volunteering in this story appears to be an act of belated rebellion against fatherly injustice, a decision against one's own political conviction, irrational and impulsive, and certainly not motivated by patriotism. It seems not unlikely that Grass's literary interpretation was influenced by his own experiences as a youth in the Second World War. In the winter of 1944 he had joined the Waffen-SS. After he disclosed this in 2006, the extent to which this decision had been voluntary became the topic of heated public debates, and even judicial procedures. As Jean-Luc Leleu shows in this book, in the case of the Waffen-SS's recruitment towards the end of the war, it is "difficult to make a distinction between real volunteers and others". It is, however, undisputed that Grass volunteered for the submarine service, a decision that he was at pains to present in interviews as not having been motivated by ideological conviction or rational choice, but rather to be explained by the wish to "get away from home", "away from the family"¹⁶ – an irrational decision made out of youthful naivety, in some ways akin to that of the boy in the short story, although Grass admits in his autobiography that he had a positive image of the army and saw the Waffen-SS as a kind of elite unit.¹⁷ This is not surprising in view of the intense militarization of German society after the defeat in 1918, as discussed in Rüdiger Bergien's article on volunteers for the German border protection units during the 1920s and early 1930s. In a period when Germany's official army was reduced to 100,000 men following the Versailles treaty, paramilitary forces, such as the free corps and the home guards, continued

to idealize war and soldiering, and this social militarization did not decline with the stabilization of the Republic in the mid-1920s. By 1939, however, attempting to fight a total war without conscription would no longer have been a real option. Even though the Second World War again provided the possibility of, and propaganda for, volunteering, it saw European armies relying almost universally on conscription.

Volunteering and citizenship: integration and illusion

The high ideological esteem in which volunteers were held in public discourse during the 19th and early 20th centuries made volunteering appear to be a means of social integration. Not all volunteers who fought for the nation of their birth – their "own" nation – were acknowledged by this nation to be members of the national community or granted the rights of political participation. For religious and racial minorities, the hope of achieving integration, emancipation, equality, and acceptance was one of the central reasons for volunteering. During the 19th century citizenship became closely linked to military service, so that voluntary service, when possible, appeared to open up a way to achieve or at least strive for citizenship. Concepts of masculinity and soldiering became increasingly intertwined during the course of the 19th century; the nation was perceived as inherently male.¹⁸ In this context military service served to justify the restriction of civil rights to men. Still, women could show their willingness for patriotic sacrifice, proving that they belonged to the nation, by working as volunteer nurses or by engaging in various forms of social work considered useful to the nation's war effort.¹⁹ In some spectacular cases in the 19th century, women even dressed up as men and enlisted.²⁰ Especially during and after the First World War, women emphasized their contribution to the war effort in order to support their claim to suffrage, although this aim was not the primary motivation of most women who served in military units or enlisted for other forms of patriotic work.²¹ As the article by Jutta Schwarzkopf in this volume on women in the British military in the Second World War shows, the motivations of women joining the military forces were diverse. Patriotism went hand in hand with the often prevailing wish to take advantage of the new possibilities that war work had opened up for individual women, and to escape from the narrow boundaries fixed by traditional gender roles.

Similarly, in some respects, European Jews looked on volunteering as a path to integration. They hoped by this means to refute the allegation that they were waiting for their return to Palestine, so that there

could be no confidence in their willingness to fight and die for their European country. This claim served as the main and most powerful argument for all those who opposed their emancipation. Therefore, in many European conflicts following the French Revolutionary Wars, a disproportionately high percentage of Jews joined up voluntarily. A comparable case, analysed in this volume by Matthias Speidel, is the large number of black Americans fighting in the Spanish-American War of 1898, although their decision to volunteer was disputed within the black community because of ongoing segregation. In his article on Irish volunteers during the American Civil War, Michael Hochgeschwender demonstrates that volunteering, for a minority, was not necessarily an integrationist experience. Rather, "complex notions of loyalty and a multi-faceted, fragmented patriotism" could also foster the development of a "double identity". In general, disappointment and disillusion seem to have been experienced by many volunteers who had hoped to be rewarded by esteem and integration. Surprisingly, however, it seems that volunteering still did not lose its attraction. The myth of volunteering was resistant to challenge by the actual experiences of volunteers. Even though, for instance, the German Jews' participation in the Franco-German War of 1870/71 did not bring the social integration they had eagerly hoped for, many Jews voluntarily rushed to the recruitment offices in 1914 with the same expectations that had already been voiced by the earlier generation of volunteers.²²

Volunteering for foreign countries: individualism, idealism, ideology

Finally, volunteers in history have not always fought for their country of birth – their "own" nation. In various wars political émigrés volunteered for foreign armies, hoping in this way to support their home country. This was the case for many Polish expatriates during the period of the Napoleonic Wars, as is shown by Ruth Leiserowitz in this book. Others deliberately left their own country to support a foreign cause. An early example in modern times is the philhellenes from all over Europe who participated in the Greek war of independence.²³ The Spanish Civil War, whose international brigades are among the most famous volunteers of the 20th century, is the best-known example of large numbers of men fighting for another country.²⁴ The international character of these volunteer brigades, the large numbers of intellectuals fighting in them, and their subsequent idealization, primarily in communist countries, as well as their appearance in many literary works,

explain their relative prominence in historical research. Judith Keene's chapter in this book shows that individuals from foreign countries volunteered not only for the Republican side but also, if on a smaller scale, for Franco's troops. Many of them went to Spain to "fight communism", perceived less as a Spanish problem than as an international "threat". And their motivation for adhering to the Francoist cause was often first and foremost "the political frameworks that they had formulated in their own home contexts", as Keene puts it.

Volunteering in a foreign country could also have repercussions on debates and politics in the volunteers' home country, as Axel Jansen shows in this book. Motivated by individual conviction, a considerable number of American students, particularly of the elite universities on the east coast, volunteered for the Allied Forces in the First World War – at a time when the United States was still neutral. The debates concerning these volunteers, their motives, their legitimacy, and their commemoration give interesting insights into concepts of individual and national responsibility and autonomy.

The role of ideology – rather than patriotism – in explaining the motives of volunteers fighting for other countries is a central question pursued by several authors in this book. José-Manoel Núñez explores the background and motivation of the "Blue Division", the Spanish volunteer division that served in Russia from 1941 to 1944. The question of ideological motivation is also taken up by Jean-Luc Leleu's chapter on the Waffen-SS volunteers. While in this case "volunteers" were often forced to join the troops, the cases of Franco's Spain and the Boer War, analysed in this book by Fransjohan Pretorius, show that foreign volunteers were by no means always warmly welcomed. Particularly among combatant parties for which nationalism was a core ideology, such as the Spanish Falange and the Boer troops, the acceptance and integration of foreign volunteers could prove difficult.

War volunteering: the history of a concept

What is a war volunteer? Any attempt to provide an "objective" definition of which soldiers fighting in the wars of the 19th and 20th centuries can be defined as "volunteers" must necessarily prove futile. *Volunteer*, *volontaire*, and *Freiwilliger* are historical terms, which evolved and changed their meaning during the period covered by this book. The volunteer was defined by contemporaries as distinct from the mercenary, the conscript, and the professional soldier. All three differentiations carried, and in many ways still carry, normative judgements.

The evolution of these normative connotations, which can be traced back to the era of the French Revolution, and the historical uses of the term "volunteer" since that time in a military context, will be analysed in the rest of this introduction, referring to British, French, German, Italian, North American, and Spanish encyclopaedias from the middle of the 18th to the beginning of the 21st century. For this analysis we have studied entries for "volunteer", "mercenary", "soldier", "guerrilla", "conscription", and "army".

In the second half of the 18th century, the entries in most encyclopaedias for the terms "mercenary" and "volunteer" were short and rather basic. Whereas a mercenary was defined as a paid, sometimes foreign, soldier, "volunteer" referred to a soldier who served voluntarily at his own expense, often to learn the military profession.²⁵ The volunteer's motivation was sometimes mentioned, but was not yet an undisputed matter of praise. For example, the longest entry for volunteering in this period, two pages under the heading "Volonteur, Voluntair, Freywilliger" in the German *Zedlers Universallexicon*, highlighted as a common stimulus the aim of getting promoted. Some volunteers were driven only by the wish "to amuse themselves together with the officers, gambling, in crapulousness or otherwise".²⁶ On the contrary, *Zedler's* much shorter combined entry for soldier and mercenary ("Soldat, Soldner, oder Söldner") did not imply any judgement.²⁷

An exception to these mostly neutral concepts in the 18th century is the definition given by Diderot's and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, which contrasted a more or less positive notion of the "volontaire" with a clearly negative idea of the "mercenaire". The volunteer was defined as "the one who enlists of his free will, without pay, contract or fixed rank, just in order to serve his king or his country, and to learn the trade of war".²⁸ At the same time, the encyclopaedists of the Enlightenment condemned the use of mercenary armies by the absolutist state: "If the citizen does not want to be oppressed, he should always be ready to defend his goods and his liberty himself. For a century now, mercenary troops have increased to an excess unknown in history. This excess ruins the peoples and the princes, and keeps up a mistrust among the powers in Europe which, even more than ambition, provokes wars [...]."²⁹ Even if not present in earlier encyclopaedias, this discourse was not new. The idea that a soldier fighting of his own will and for his own goals is more reliable and in the end also more effective than a warrior who goes to war for money or under coercion is certainly not limited to modern times, but can also be found in antiquity.³⁰ This line of argument was taken up in the Renaissance period, its most prominent

theorist at the time being Machiavelli – who, in a chapter on the different military constitutions in *Il Principe*, put forward the view that "mercenary armies never achieve anything, and cause only harm."³¹ The same discourse later fuelled the heated debates about the new military constitution during the French Revolution, and was reproduced in other encyclopaedias in the first half of the 19th century.³²

While the entry for the term "mercenary" in many encyclopaedias remained neutral until the end of the 19th century, the recruitment of mercenaries was often negatively viewed in other articles, as for example in the article on soldiers.³³ The *Neues rheinisches Conversations-Lexicon* in 1835 distinguished "Soldaten" (soldiers), who "defend their fatherland", from "Söldner" (mercenaries), who "do not care for the cause they are fighting for".³⁴ French encyclopaedias mentioned that the term "mercenaire" is also used to describe an "egoistic person".³⁵

Positive normative definitions of the volunteer, however, appeared with increasing frequency in the course of the 19th century. In 1816, for example, the *Encyclopaedia Perthensis* applauded the "laudable purpose" of the British during the Revolutionary Wars, when "in defence of their country" they voluntarily "rose as one man".³⁶ The Revolutionary Wars, which produced an unprecedented number of volunteers all over Europe, thus appear at first sight once again as a watershed in military history. The analysis of a larger number of encyclopaedias, however, shows that this change of perception was not a quick or linear process. Up to the middle of the 19th century we find encyclopaedias that confine the entry for "volunteer" to a basic definition or do not include the term at all.³⁷

With the introduction of compulsory military service, volunteers, at least those who did not serve in the regular units, were sometimes viewed as ineffective. In 1870, at a time when conscription in Germany was held in high esteem and the German military system was a source of national pride, *Meyers Lexikon* was convinced that irregular volunteer units ("Freischaren") "due to the lack of tactical training and military discipline generally achieve little". Nevertheless, the author added that there had also been occasions in recent history when volunteer units "led by capable commanders distinguished themselves".³⁸

But such ambivalent views became more and more the exception. In the second half of the 19th century, the term volunteering usually had a positive connotation, even in those countries that relied on conscription. Critics of professional armies thus tended to use the term "mercenaries" instead of "volunteers" when referring to recruits in these armies, as was noted by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1911: "The

name is sometimes used as a term of reproach by nations who raise their armies by conscription, of armies raised by voluntary enlistment whose members are paid a more or less living wage."³⁹ And, indeed, the entry "Söldner" of the German *Brockhaus* in 1934 described British and American soldiers before 1914 as mercenaries.⁴⁰ Interestingly, though, the encyclopaedias did not generally distinguish clearly between professional soldiers who enlisted voluntarily in a standing army and war-time volunteers who served beside the regulars for the duration of the war, but often conflated the two categories.⁴¹

Between the late 19th and the early 20th century, encyclopaedias paid more attention to volunteering and war volunteers than ever before. The articles grew in length and were no longer confined to mere definitions or brief judgements; rather, volunteering was now usually analysed as a historical phenomenon. Sometimes even traced back to ancient times, the evolution of the phenomenon in modern times and its particular features since the advent of national wars were recounted in detail.⁴² French encyclopaedias continued to paint the most favourable picture of volunteers. Although a fundamental critique of the volunteer myth had been published by Camille Rousset as early as June 1870, shortly before the French-German war, neither his convincing analysis nor the crisis of 1870/71 destroyed or even significantly destabilized the myth of the *volontaires* in the Third Republic.⁴³ This is reflected in the *Grand Dictionnaire du dix-neuvième siècle*, which in 1876 indulged in praise of the Revolutionary volunteers: "But it is the national volunteers, the volunteers of the French Revolution, who have particularly shaped the image of their role and their character, an image that was even more pure as it was not the vain lust for glory that pushed a whole generation to the battlefields, but patriotism, the most heroic feeling that can raise a great people. It is well known what miracles these men achieved."⁴⁴

In several cases, the raising of national volunteers was perceived as an indicator of universal progress. At the same time, the use of mercenaries appeared more and more outdated since the nationalization of war: "Since the Napoleonic Wars, the use of mercenary troops seems to have disappeared for ever," wrote the *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada europeo-americana* in 1917.⁴⁵ Interestingly, this encyclopaedia includes contradictory judgements on volunteer service in the articles on "ejercito" and "voluntariado" respectively. In the article on "ejercito", published in 1915, England is cited as the main example of an army based on volunteer recruitment, yet the British forces are criticized as weak and costly. In addition, volunteer recruitment is characterized as the recruitment system "dominant" before the French Revolution, and not clearly

distinguished from mercenarism. Due to the general "feminization" of modern societies, the author adds in this negative vein, it is too difficult to recruit volunteers in sufficient numbers. In contrast, the author of the 1929 article on "volontariados" exalts the great achievements of the 1808 volunteers in the Spanish uprising against Napoleon, quotes authors who idealize volunteers as "the best soldiers", and praises "the excellent results" of a military system that makes use of volunteer units in addition to the standing army.⁴⁶ England and the US are mentioned as examples of volunteer recruitment systems, this time without any negative implications, in spite of what one might have expected considering that Spain in the late 1920s was a dictatorship.

On the whole, only a minority of encyclopaedias linked the phenomenon of the volunteer to political constitution. Rather, a growing number of encyclopaedias strongly nationalized the definition of "volunteer" in the second half of the 19th century. In many encyclopaedias in Britain as well as in Prussia (in the German *Reich* after 1871), the definition of volunteering refers exclusively to a specific institution within the military system. In the British case, this was the Volunteer Force created in the second half of the 19th century and its antecedents.⁴⁷ In the German case, the encyclopaedias dedicated their entries to the so-called "Einjährig Freiwillige", a volunteer service of 12 months, which allowed more highly educated youths to reduce their compulsory service from three years to one if they paid their own expenses.⁴⁸ Moreover, the "Einjährig Freiwillige" enjoyed several other privileges. Here, what defined a volunteer was not the motivation, but money. This was in contrast to the general trend, as, since the establishment of universal conscription, the volunteer was usually no longer requested to equip himself. In a way, qualifying those soldiers as volunteers concealed the fact that the institution was a special concession to those who could afford it.

The nationalization of volunteering could be even more explicit; some authors portrayed it as a specific national feature. While the German *Brockhaus* in 1894, for example, characterized the German volunteers in the anti-Napoleonic period as being "inspired by the noblest spirit", it attributed patriotism to only some of the French Revolutionary volunteers and insinuated that others volunteered "in fear of the guillotine".⁴⁹ In 1892, *Chambers Encyclopaedia* distinguished the British volunteer movement as "unique in the history of nations". When Britain had been menaced by war in 1859, an "armed force rose up as if by magic. [...] It became apparent that the spirit was one inherent in the national character."⁵⁰ Similarly, the *Enciclopedia Italiana* from

1939 asserted that “what for other nations has been an episode, has remained a tradition in Italy, in fact, the volunteer spirit is perceived by the Italians as a tradition and the most objective foreign observers confirm it to be a traditional feature of the Italian soul.”⁵¹

The quoted article on “volontari” in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* from the period of fascism is worth further examination, as it demonstrates the high esteem in which the dictatorial regime held volunteering. The author describes war volunteering as a phenomenon known in “all periods which are characterized by deep contests about ideals”. This statement is underpinned by a short historical sketch of war volunteering from antiquity to the 19th century. The article clearly distinguishes ancient, medieval, and early modern volunteers from modern Italian volunteers, reserving new and higher values for the latter: “But the real Italian volunteer spirit, which is perceived as volunteer spirit for nothing else than for the communal historical conscience, only rose when a genuine national sentiment awoke in the Italians’ bosom: at that moment, the volunteer tradition of the adventurers from the first centuries of the modern era turned into the patriotic volunteer spirit of our time.”⁵²

Somewhat paradoxically, this article of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, written under a dictatorship, appears to be the most euphoric of all the entries on “volunteering” we have considered for this analysis. While it is not surprising that a fascist encyclopaedia idealizes soldierly values and individual sacrifice for the nation, the exaltation of volunteers is still not self-evident in a system that relies upon compulsory military training from childhood onwards. It may be interpreted as a strategy to conceal the coercive character of the military system and the decreasing space for free will. On the other hand, it also points towards the question of individual agency in dictatorial regimes, which, for example, also lay behind the debates around Günter Grass’s enlistment in the Waffen-SS. In fact, the author of the article in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* is aware of the ambivalence inherent in his eulogy. According to him, the volunteer spirit alone does not suffice to achieve the best results. Only under the Mussolini regime, when “national discipline and the volunteers’ spontaneity” merged, did the volunteer spirit “reach its apex.”⁵³ In National Socialist Germany in 1939, the entry “Freiwilliger” in *Meyers Lexikon* is much more factual, giving detailed instructions on how to apply for voluntary enlistment.⁵⁴

After 1945, in the face of the enormous devastation and casualty numbers of the Second World War, and under the impact of demilitarization and Europeanization, war volunteering lost its appeal. The entries for

“volunteer” in encyclopaedias all over Europe quickly shrank in size.⁵⁵ Today the term “war volunteer” has all but disappeared from Western political discourse; it has been reduced to a historical term. “Volunteer” in 21st-century usage generally refers to civic engagement: thus, from its inception, the Wikipedia entry for “volunteer” has been almost entirely dedicated to civil volunteers. A short mention of military volunteers in Autumn 2007 gave only a rather sarcastic definition of volunteering not for, but within, the army: “In the armed forces ‘volunteer’ takes on a number of meanings. It can mean that the individual has actually consented to some dangerous mission. However more commonly it means that the officer [...] has picked you for something unpleasant/onerous/dangerous: ‘I need three volunteers; you, you, and you’. Or ‘dress forward one pace all those who want to volunteer’, nearly the whole squad quickly dresses to the rear leaving only the dimmest ‘dressed forward’.”⁵⁶ Since then the article has been changed, and now does not include any reference to military volunteers; instead, there is a short and rather neutral entry for “military volunteer”.⁵⁷ In the French version of Wikipedia, such an entry is absent: the headword “volontaire” refers exclusively to a long entry for civic volunteers (“bénévolat”).⁵⁸

Yet, even if the general term “volunteer” seems today to be associated primarily with civic volunteers, this trend should not lead to the conclusion that military volunteering has ceased to play a role. One of the latest examples that prove the opposite is the war in Iraq in 2003, when both Iraqi expatriates and volunteers from many Arab countries rushed to support Iraq “with something of the passion of young Europeans joining the Spanish civil war in the 1930s”, according to a contemporary magazine.⁵⁹ The American and British forces were completely made up of professional soldiers, based on voluntary recruitment, and not a few young Americans volunteered with the specific wish to fight in this war.

The trend in Europe in recent years is clearly in favour of voluntary recruitment systems. Although the term “war volunteer” has gone out of fashion, public opinion favours voluntary recruitment systems over conscription. Great Britain returned to its traditional preference for a volunteer army in the 1960s; on the continent conscription was maintained much longer, but came under scrutiny in the 1990s. Belgium started by abolishing conscription in 1994, the Netherlands “adjourned” it in 1996, France followed in 2001, Spain in 2002, and Italy in 2005. Denmark decided in 2004 to recruit conscripts only when it was not possible to find enough volunteers.⁶⁰ Joining the forces today is generally portrayed as a career choice. The terms used for the

soldiers of volunteer armies are “professional soldier”/ “Berufssoldat”/ “soldat de carrière” and, although somewhat less often, “volunteer”/ “Freiwilliger”/ “volontaire”. War has disappeared from the job title. Still, in the recruiting messages of both US and European armies, many of the motives ascribed to volunteers in this book are addressed – in changing combinations. Thus, the US Marine Corps first calls upon the recruits’ patriotism, with its appeal “Answer the calling to serve our country” and its stress on the aim of “winning battles”.⁶¹ The US army’s recruitment website, in a similar manner, and by way of emotional music and videos, combines the appeal to patriotism with the promise of adventure, and other arguments for a military career.⁶² Neither internet site neglects the financial aspects or the attractions of adventure. The British army’s short recruitment video on its internet site mainly evokes images of masculinity that are closely connected with physical fitness; it does not seem far-fetched to see this as a continuation of the British tradition of portraying the soldier as a sportsman, which reaches back into the 19th century.⁶³ The promise of adventure is not missing in this video; a new element is the fascination of modern weapon techniques. On the website, career paths and financial attractions (“Money matters”) are outlined in detail; an appeal to patriotism is not among the central messages.

Compared with the American and British sites, the French army’s recruiting sites are characterized by the relative absence of emotional messages and pictures, instead mainly providing information about the various possibilities and career paths within the army. A few pictures are included on the site, but these are small and do not attract attention; and, where the US marines tell stories of combat, the French army includes a link to the “typical day” of a soldier, which lists primarily meal and work times.⁶⁴ Indeed, the “battle” mentioned most prominently on the army’s website is that against unemployment, in which it claims to play an important role.⁶⁵ Whereas the US-American sites make it clear that they may be recruiting volunteers to fight in wars, this is not the main message of the French site. And, while classical military values such as discipline, solidarity, and team spirit are mentioned on the recruitment sites of all three countries, the appeal to patriotism is less prominent on the European sites than on their American counterparts, although it is featured in phrases such as “missions entrusted to the [French] Republic”. The site of the French marine force differs somewhat from that of the *force de terre*, as it uses more pictures and videos; even these, however, convey technical information rather than emotional messages, without the use of music. In an inconspicuous place, “servir

son pays” is included among the reasons for recruits to enlist.⁶⁶ Thus, on the whole, the French force’s idea of how volunteers should be best addressed differs remarkably from the British and American concepts; these differences also reflect the respective images of the army, of war, and of military volunteers in British, French, and American societies.

The analysis of volunteering, whether for a specific war or for a professional standing army, offers insights into the relationship between the military, the nation, and society in modern history that would remain hidden if one were to concentrate exclusively on conscription. By focusing on volunteers, the following contributions evaluate the scope of individual agency in different wars and societies, discuss changing images of war, and open new perspectives on conflicts within nations, on the status of minority groups and their hopes for war’s potential to effect change, as well as on war experiences and commemoration. Closely linked in many cases to ideologies, especially to nationalism, war volunteering is an indicator of norms and values, and the study of volunteering also yields information about the translation of these norms and values into action. The comparative perspective opened by the contributions in this book aims to provide an incentive for further research.

Notes

1. Experiences of war are the main focus of the German Research Council’s Collaborative Research Center at the University of Tübingen. The research centre provided the intellectual context in which this book originated, and in 2007 financed a conference on War Volunteering that laid the foundations for this volume. Studies on conscription, conscientious objection and desertion include, among others, D. J. Stoker et al. (eds) (2008) *Conscription in the Napoleonic Era: A Revolution in Military Affairs?* (New York); M. Koch (2008) *Fahnenfluchten: Deserteure der Wehrmacht im Zweiten Weltkrieg-Lebenswege und Entscheidungen* (Paderborn); J. Leonhard and U. v. Hirschhausen (eds) (2007) *Multi-ethnic Empires and the Military: Conscription in Europe between Integration and Disintegration, 1860–1918* (München); W. Benecke (2006) *Militär, Reform und Gesellschaft im Zarenreich* (Paderborn); C. Jahr (1998) *Gewöhnliche Soldaten: Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914–1918* (Göttingen); U. Frevort (2004) *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford); A. Crépin (2005) *Défendre la France: les Français, la guerre et le service militaire, de la guerre de Sept ans à Verdun* (Rennes). It is also revealing that, in the indexes of important compendiums on the history of warfare, the term “conscription” is to be found while the term “volunteer” is not; see, for example, C. Townshend (ed.) (2005) *The Oxford History of Modern War*, new updated edn (Oxford); G. Parker (ed.) (2005) *The Cambridge History of Warfare* (Cambridge).

2. T. Hippler (2008) *Citizens, Soldiers and National Armies: Military Service in France and Germany, 1789–1830* (London), p. 1.
3. The first exaltation of the *Freikorps Lützow* was the poem "Lützows wilde Jagd" by Theodor Körner, a member of the corps and patriotic poet, written in early 1813, shortly before his death in battle. See T. Körner (1859) *Leyer und Schwert*, 9th edn (Berlin), pp. 57–9. It was put to music by one of the representatives of romanticism in German music, Carl Maria von Weber, in 1814, and achieved longstanding popularity in Germany. In the 1920s, Kurt Tucholsky published a satirical version, drawing parallels with the freecorps movement of the Weimar Republic, *Die Weltbühne*, 6, 9 February 1926, p. 210. For the history of black, red and gold see P. Reichel (2005) *Schwarz-Rot-Gold: kleine Geschichte deutscher Nationalsymbole nach 1945*, Lizenzausgabe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Bonn), pp. 15–31.
4. Crépin (2005); A. Forrest (1989) *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (New York); Hippler (2008); J. A. Lynn (2006) *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791–94* (Oxford).
5. Planert (2007) "Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg": *Frankreichs Kriege und der deutsche Süden. Alltag-Wahrnehmung-Deutung 1792–1841* (Paderborn), p. 151. See also U. Planert (forthcoming) "Old or New? The French Wars: towards a concept of evolutionary change" in R. Chickering and S. Forster (eds) *Wars in an Age of Revolution: The Wars of American Independence and the French Revolution, 1775–1815* (Cambridge).
6. See P. Brandt (1995) "Einstellungen, motive und Ziele von Kriegsfreiwilligen, 1813–14: das Freikorps Lützow" in J. Dülffer (ed.) *Kriegsbereitschaft und Friedensordnung in Deutschland 1800–1814* (Münster), 211–33; K. Hagemann (2002) "Männlicher Muth und teutsche Ehre": *Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens* (Paderborn), 406–15; and, with a focus on Southern Germany, U. Planert (2007), 596–13. Only a few hints are given by A. Seyferth (2007), *Die Heimatfront 1870/71. Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im deutsch-französischen Krieg* (Paderborn).
7. See, for example, the classic J. M. McPherson (1997) *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York).
8. P. Simkins (1988) *Kitchener's Army. The Raising of the New Armies, 1914–16*, (Manchester), p. xiv; see also J. M. Osborne (1982) *The Voluntary Recruiting Movement in Britain, 1914–16* (New York); W. J. Reader, (1988) *At Duty's Call: A Study in Obsolete Patriotism* (Manchester and New York); I. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.) (1985) *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester); J. M. Winter (1986) *The Great War and the British People* (Cambridge, Mass.).
9. See, for example, N. Gullace (1987) "White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War", *Journal of British Studies*, 36:2, 178–206; L. Bibbings (2003) "Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War", *Social and Legal Studies*, 12, 335–58.
10. A. Gregory (2003) "British 'War Enthusiasm' in 1914: A Reassessment" in G. Braybon (ed.) *Evidence, History and the Great War. Historians and the Impact of 1914–18* (New York and Oxford), 67–85; C. Pennell (2008) *A Kingdom United: British and Irish Popular Responses to the Outbreak of War, July to December 1914* (PhD thesis Dublin).
11. M. Erzberger (1914) *Die Mobilmachung* (Berlin), p. 4.
12. Thus, for example, the short overview given by B. Ziemann (2003) "Kriegsfreiwillige" in G. Hirschfeld (ed.) *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg* (Paderborn), 640ff. The limited scope of this article, which covers only British and German volunteers, is indicative of the state of research on volunteering in the First World War.
13. See, for example, G. L. Mosse (1990) *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York).
14. B. Ulrich (1989) "Kriegsfreiwillige. Motivationen – Erfahrungen – Wirkungen" in Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt (ed.) *August 1914. Ein Volk zieht in den Krieg* (Berlin), 232–42; B. Ulrich (1992) "Die Desillusionierung der Kriegsfreiwilligen von 1914" in Wette, Wolfgang (ed.) *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von unten*, München, 110–26; J. Verhey (2001) *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge).
15. G. Grass (1999) *My Century*, translated by M. H. Heim (London), p. 20.
16. *Time Magazine*, 14 August 2006; *Telegraph*, 12 August 2006.
17. G. Grass (2008) *Peeling the Onion*, translated by M. H. Heim (London), p. 110.
18. See, for example, N. Yuval-Davis (2003) *Gender & Nation*, repr. (London); I. Blom et al. (eds.) (2000) *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford); Hagemann (2002); U. Frevert (1996) "Nation, Krieg und Geschlecht im 19. Jahrhundert" in M. Hettling and P. Nolte (eds) *Nation und Gesellschaft in Deutschland* (München), 151–70; U. Frevert (2006) "War" in S. Berger (ed.) *A Companion to Nineteenth-century Europe: 1789–1914* (Malden) 417–31.
19. See, for example, A. Summers (1988) *Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses, 1854–1914* (London); J. Quateart (2001) *Staging Philanthropy, Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813–1916* (Ann Arbor).
20. R. M. Dekker and L. C. van de Pol (1989) "Republican Heroines: Cross-Dressing Women in the French Revolutionary Armies", *History of European Ideas*, 10:3, 353–64; Hagemann (2002), p. 383–93.
21. See, for example, M. R. Higonnet et al. (eds.) (1987) *Behind the Lines. Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven); N. L. Goldman (ed.) (1982) *Female Soldiers – Combatants or Non-Combatants? Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Westport); M. H. Darrow (1996) "French Volunteer Nursing and the Myth of War Experience in World War I", *The American Historical Review*, 101, 80–106; U. Planert (2000) "Zwischen Partizipation und Restriktion. Frauenemanzipation und nationales Paradigma von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg" in D. Langewiesche and G. Schmidt (eds) *Föderative Nation. Deutschlandkonzepte von der Reformation bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (München), 387–428; Frevert (1996); D. Platz (2005) *We had been the Women's Army – Womens' Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Kriegserfahrungen von Frauen im Hilfsdienst der britischen Armee des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt/Main).

22. U. Sieg (2008) *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 2nd edn (Berlin); C. G. Krüger (2006) *Sind wir denn nicht Brüder?* (Paderborn), p. 53–65.
23. See W. St. Clair (1972) *That Greece Might Still Be Free. The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (London).
24. See, for example, V. Brome (1994) *The International Brigades. Spain, 1936–1939* (London); K. Bradley and M. Chappel (1994) *International Brigades in Spain, 1936–1939* (London); P. N. Carrol (1994) *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford); J. McLellan (2004) *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades, 1945–1989* (Oxford).
25. See, for example, "Volontaire" (1765) in D. Diderot (ed.) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers par une société de gens de lettres. Mis en ordre et publ. par M. Diderot et quant à la partie mathématique par M. d'Alembert*, vol. 17 (Paris), 454; "Volunteers" (1771), in *Encyclopaedia Britannica: or, A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*; 3 volumes, vol. 3: M–Z (Edinburgh), repr. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, New York 1968, 928; "Volontär" (1801) in J. J. Adelung *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, vol. 4 (Leipzig), 1237; "Volunteer" in Moore (1805) *The Midshipman's Or British Mariner's Vocabulary: Being a Universal Dictionary of Technical Terms and Sea Phrases Used in the Construction, Equipment, Management and Military Operations of a Ship*, 2nd edn (London).
26. "Volonteur, Volontair, Freywilliger" (1746) in Johann Heinrich Zedlers *groses vollständiges Universallexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, vol. 50: Vo–Vrh (Leipzig) column 636.
27. "Soldat, Soldner, oder Söldner" (1743) in *ibid.*, vol. 38: Sk–Spie, (Leipzig), column 415.
28. "Volontaire" in Diderot (1765).
29. "Mercenaire" in *ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 369. Michael Sikora stresses in a recent article on the history of mercenarism that "mercenaries have always had a bad press" and quotes further literature on the negative image of the mercenary in early modern Europe. At the same time, however, he clarifies that the negative connotation of the term in itself and the moral condemnation of the mercenary only developed in the late modern period. M. Sikora (2003) 'Söldner. Historische Annäherung an einen Kriegertypus', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 29, 210–38, pp. 227, 230, cf. also S. Percy (2007) *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations* (Oxford), pp. 14–67.
30. See, for example, J. E. Lendon (2007) "War and Society", in P. Sabin et al. (eds) *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge), vol. 1: Greece, the Hellenistic world and the rise of Rome, 498–516, p. 499f.; L. A. Burckhardt (1996) *Bürger und Soldaten, Aspekte der politischen und militärischen Rolle athenischer Bürger im Kriegswesen des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Stuttgart), pp. 143f.
31. N. Machiavelli (1988) *The Prince*, ed. by Q. Skinner and R. Price (Cambridge), p. 44. Cf. M. E. Mallett *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (Totowa, NJ) 1974; cf. N. Machiavelli (2003) *The Art of War* translated, edited, and with a commentary by Christopher Lynch (Chicago and London).
32. See, for example, "Heerwesen" (1839) in K. W. Rotteck (ed.) *Staats-Lexikon oder Encyclopädie der Staatswissenschaften: In Verbindung mit vielen der angesehensten Publicisten Deutschlands*, vol. 7 (Altona), 574–607, and "Conscription" (1836), in *ibid.*, vol. 3, 732–56; cf. Crépin (2005).
33. "Soldaten" (1827) in *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände. Conversations-Lexikon* (Leipzig), 7th edn, vol. 10, 337–60, pp. 337–45. This article is also an example of how vague the concept of volunteers could be at that time: whereas the definition of a soldier is clearly opposed to the definition of a volunteer who fights for his fatherland without being paid, the article classifies mercenaries as volunteers.
34. "Soldaten" (1835) in *Neues rheinisches Conversations-Lexicon: Oder encyclopädisches Handwörterbuch für gebildete Stände* (Köln), 997–1008, p. 997.
35. "Mercenaire" in *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture* (1853–1860), 2nd edn, (Paris), vol. 13, 76.
36. "Volunteers" (1816) in *Encyclopaedia Perthesensis, or Universal Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences, Literature, etc.: Intended to Supersede the Use of Other Books of Reference*, 2nd edn, vol. 23 (Edinburgh), 23.
37. See, for example, "Volontaires" (1838) in *Encyclopédie du dix-neuvième siècle: répertoire universel des sciences, des lettres et des arts, avec la biographie de tous les hommes célèbres*, vol. 25: Veg–Zyr, (Paris), 483; "Freiwillige, Volontärs" (1854) in *Herders Conversations-Lexikon. Kurze aber deutliche Erklärung von allem Wissenswerthen aus dem Gebiete der Religion, Philosophie, Geschichte, Geographie, Sprache, Literatur, Kunst, Natur- und Gewerbekunde, Handel, der Fremdwörter und ihrer Aussprache etc. etc.*, vol. 2: Cardatur–Fyt (Freiburg i.B.), 797.
38. "Freischaren" (1870) in H. J. Meyer (ed.) *Neues Konversationslexikon*, 2nd edn, vol. 7 (Hildburghausen), 78.
39. "Mercenary" (1911) in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, 11th edn, vol. 18 (Cambridge), 150.
40. "Söldner" (1934) in *Der Große Brockhaus*, 15th edn, vol. 17: Schr–Spu (Leipzig), 513.
41. For example, "voluntariado" (1929) in: *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada europeo-americana: etimologías sanscrito, hebreo, griego, latín, árabe, lenguas indígenas americanas, etc.; versiones de la mayoría de las voces en frances, italiano, inglés, alemán, portugués, catalán, esperanto*, (Madrid), 1102–05, p. 1103; "Freiwillige" (1930) in *Der Große Brockhaus*, 15th edn, vol. 6: F–Gar, (Leipzig), 587; this distinction is only to be found in the late 20th century, for example "volunteers" (1961) in *Encyclopaedia Britannica: A New Survey of Universal Knowledge* (Chicago), 23, 252.
42. Entries for "soldiers" and "armies" address the history of volunteering much earlier; see, for example, "Heerwesen" (1839), in *Staats-Lexikon*; "Soldier" (1835) in *Neues rheinisches Conversations-Lexicon*.
43. C. Rousset (1870) *Les Volontaires, 1791–1794* (Paris); see also J. Leonhard (2008): *Bellizismus und Nation. Kriegsdeutung und Nationsbestimmung in Europa und den Vereinigten Staaten, 1750–1914* (München), p. 539–45.
44. "Volontaire" (1876) in P. Larousse (ed.) *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle: français, historique, géographique, mythologique, bibliographique, littéraire, artistique, scientifique, etc.* (Paris), 147f., column 1174.
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2

Volunteers of the French Revolutionary Wars: Myths and Reinterpretations

Thomas Hippler

In 1822, Goethe published an autobiographical account of the *Campaign in France in 1792*, which he had eye-witnessed from the camp of the coalition troops waging war against revolutionary France.¹ Even if it was written 30 years after the events,² Goethe's narrative nevertheless gives an excellent insight into the construction of the volunteer of the French Revolution as a mythical figure.³ The French military was, in fact, the subject of many publications during the time of the revolutionary wars, and Goethe's account can be said to correspond with general interpretative tendencies among those writers who were moderately favourable to the revolutionary achievements.⁴ The Prussian defeat in Valmy on 20 September was commented on by Goethe with the famous dictum "here and now a new era of world history has begun." The success of the French had proven the inefficiency and the anachronism of both the military and the political system of the *Ancien Régime*. But how did Goethe and his contemporaries view the volunteers of the French Revolution? The vision was actually quite contradictory. The volunteers embodied indiscipline, and thus the brute animalistic force of the rabble, since soldiers were identified with disciplined behaviour.⁵ However, a heroic sense of honour was also recognized in their behaviour⁶ as the consequence of their "political enthusiasm".⁷ It was exactly the ambiguous combination of these two characteristics – heroic enthusiasm and indiscipline – that was considered to constitute their particular power.

From very early on, the volunteers of the French Revolution become the subject of political stylizations, inasmuch as they constituted an object of mythical identification for various political purposes. In particular, they were a historical phenomenon in which republicans of the